

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**ARMY NATIONAL GUARD (ARNG) SPECIAL FORCES (SF) UNITS:
THE STANDARD AND THE FUTURE**

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ABSTRACT

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Currently, ARNG SF Soldiers and Units are essential components of the United States National Security Strategy (NSS). Yet these part-time SF Soldiers are not trained to the same standard as their Active SF counterparts. Army National Guard SF units are not sufficiently trained or resourced. Their capabilities and readiness were further degraded by their recent high operational tempo. This SRP addresses shortfalls in ARNG SF training and standards and provides recommendations to require all SF Soldiers to meet the same Army standards in order to support the NSS.

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD (ARNG) SPECIAL FORCES (SF) UNITS: THE STANDARD AND THE FUTURE

The National Security Strategy (NSS) specifies that the nation will make use of every resource in our arsenal to win the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). In this war the enemy is not a single political entity, but one that is politically and religiously motivated. This enemy takes great pleasure in violence against the innocent. But this enemy has seen what the strategic asset Special Operations Forces (SOF) can accomplish in Afghanistan and Iraq.¹ With its global reach, SOF will continue to provide a vital means for winning the war against terrorists. Indeed, such strategists as TX Hammes assert that we are entering a fourth generation of warfare in which SOF will play a critical role. Hammes observes that insurgents and terrorists are not impressed with conventional power. They will use techniques and tactics that circumvent the training and experience of our conventional forces. This is why SOF plays a significant role in the National Security Strategy. According to Hammes, it is essential that we recruit, train, educate, and retain the kinds of personnel we need to fight in the 21st century.²

Currently, Army National Guard (ARNG) SOF Soldiers and units are essential components of U.S. SOF capabilities to support the NSS. Yet these part-time SOF Soldiers are not always trained to the same standards as are Active SOF Soldiers, and ARNG SOF units are likewise not sufficiently trained or resourced. Their capabilities and readiness have been further degraded by their recent high operational tempo. Accordingly, the Army's overall SOF capabilities have been weakened. Yet these Soldiers and units are needed more than ever to defeat the emerging terrorist threats.

This SRP describes the similarities and differences between Active and ARNG SOF and includes the writer's perspectives based on 31 years experience within the community. Additionally, it identifies shortfalls and concludes with recommendations for holding all SOF Soldiers and units to the same Army standards in order to support the NSS.

A Definition of a Special Forces Soldier

Special Forces (SF) are U.S. Army forces organized, trained, and equipped to conduct Special Operations (SO), with an emphasis on unconventional warfare. These Soldiers are highly trained and experienced professionals, the most versatile SO Soldiers in the world. They can plan and conduct SO across the spectrum of military operations. Their tactical actions may often have operational or strategic effects.³

Situational Awareness of Special Forces in the Guard.

Army National Guard Special Forces currently fill an important role in the Special Operations organization. The U. S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) consists of the 75th Ranger Regiment, the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, the U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command, a Sustainment Brigade, the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, and the U.S. Army Special Forces Command.

There are seven Special Forces Groups with a total of approximately 10,500 personnel. The ARNG provides two of these groups—approximately 2000 Special Forces Soldiers.⁴ The ARNG SF groups include the 19th Special Forces Group, headquartered at Camp Williams, Utah, and the 20th Special Forces Group, headquartered at Birmingham, Alabama.

The Special Forces Group constitutes the largest combat element of Army Special Forces. It consists of a Headquarters and Headquarters Company and three Special Forces battalions, as well as a Group Support Company. In the ARNG, these sub-units are scattered throughout the continental United States and are subordinate not only to the Group Headquarters, usually outside their state, but also to their own states' respective Troop Commands.⁵ With the aforementioned dispersion of ARNG SF units among the states, presents a myriad of issues. Each state uniquely exercises its command and control of its Special Forces units. Funding, manning, facilities, training requirements, and taskings are often very different and sometimes conflict with direction from SF command.

Special Forces Qualification and Key Tasks

Individuals (Active or ARNG) qualify for Special Forces by successfully completing six phases of training.⁶ Prior to the initiation of this training, they must meet certain prerequisites. They must volunteer for airborne training and complete that training prior to attending the Special Forces Qualification Course. Before the ARNG sends SF candidates to airborne school, they must find a vacant slot. These class slots are not always open; so many SF candidates must wait considerable periods to meet this prerequisite. Since these individuals are part-time military members who are often trying to juggle their home life, school, or vocations so that they can attend, these unpredictable delays are problematic. Special Forces ARNG units must certify Soldiers' availability and physical fitness before requesting jump school slots. The Active Duty SF community does not share this problem, since these individuals come to them for SF training already airborne qualified.

Individuals who desire to become SF qualified must have a grade technical (GT) score of 110, waiverable to 100. They must be high school graduates or have general equivalency

degrees (GED). They must hold ranks of Specialist to Sergeant First Class; in the case of officers, they must be promotable to 1st Lieutenant or Captain. They must pass a SF physical and pass a 50-meter swim test wearing Battle Dress Uniform (BDU) and boots. (It should be noted that the SF School does offer a two-week swim course prior to the selection course for non-swimmers, but ARNG Special Forces will seldom send a non-swimmer to the school). Candidates must pass the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) with a minimum score of 229, and enlisted candidates must complete the Primary Leadership Development Course (PLDC) prior to attending. Attending PLDC is consistently an issue for ARNG SF due to its limited availability. The issues concerning ARNG candidates' attendance at PLDC are similar to those experienced for airborne school.

After the ARNG SF unit has determined that their candidates have met the prerequisites to attend Special Forces training, they enter the Special Forces Qualification Course. The requirement for ARNG SF units to certify that their candidates have attained the prescribed prerequisites is unique. In fact, the Guard's requirement to recruit certifiable candidates is unique. Active Duty Special Forces Groups are not similarly distracted by recruitment, selection, and qualification, so they are free to focus on war-fighting and sustainment.

Guard candidates, like their Active Duty counter-parts, begin their qualification process with assignment to the Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS) program. This 24-day program is conducted at Camp MacKall, North Carolina. The training is designed to determine whether candidates are suitable for Special Forces training. Candidates for SF are continuously evaluated from the time they in-process until they out-process. Candidates are thoroughly tested for land navigation skills. Although several attributes are tested by the training cadre, physical fitness and endurance are the most thoroughly evaluated.

Since attendance in SFAS is a prerequisite and is not a part of the course, the only candidates allowed to attend the subsequent qualification course are those that succeed in the SFAS program. So the ARNG SF units must await their candidates' SFAS qualification before requesting their assignment to the SF training program. These requests must go through the approval layers of the State and National Guard Bureau. On occasion, delays in approval force the individual to come home and miss the follow-on qualification course. This disruption presents several problems for candidates. It may cause them to go without pay (civilian or military) for an extended period because of a gap in orders. Or they may lose confidence in the system or unit, which becomes a significant issue for individuals already under considerable stress. Anything that happens during the candidates' progress through the system that slows

their qualification has a negative effect on not only the Guard unit, but also on the candidates and their families.

Candidates who successfully complete SFAS are then authorized to attend Phase II, which consists of 46 days of training mainly in small-unit tactics. This also takes place at Camp MacKall. It consists of 39 days of land navigation and field craft, incorporated into tactical training. After the successful completion of this phase, Soldiers are permitted to attend Phase III.

Phase III consists of military occupational skill specific training. This phase can range from 65 to 322 days of training for the following specialties: the 18A Officers' Course (65 days), the Weapons Sergeants' Course (65 days), the Engineer Sergeants' Course (65 days), and the Medical Sergeants' Course (322 days). Upon successful conclusion of their specialist training, candidates attend Phase IV, the culmination phase.

Phase IV is again conducted at Camp MacKall. During this phase, candidates test what they have learned thus far. They participate in a 19-day exercise called Robin Sage, a problem-solving, field-training exercise (FTX). At the conclusion of Robin Sage, the candidates proceed to Phase V.

Phase V is language training. Depending on the language, the courses range from 18 to 24 weeks in duration. At the end of this course of instruction, candidates are expected to speak, listen to, and read the language at a basic level of competence. At the completion of this phase, the candidate begins Phase VI.

Phase VI is a 19-day course in Survival Evasion Resistance and Escape (SERE). It is intended to teach personnel how to survive if separated from their unit or captured.

Sustainment

Upon completion of the Special Forces Qualification Course, ARNG Soldiers are returned to their units and civilian life, while Active Duty Soldiers are assigned to their Active Duty SF Group. For Active and Guard Soldiers alike, the education and professional development does not end with SFQC. For example, all Special Forces units require jumpmasters to conduct and control airborne operations. Guard SF units jump a minimum of four times a year, just as their Active Duty counterparts do. Comparative issues associated with airborne operations are discussed in detail later in this paper.

Special Forces Soldiers must remain current in their occupational skills. For example, communications Soldiers are expected to remain proficient. Special Forces communications must be seamless, robust, automated, and full spectrum. Communications personnel must train

on systems in order to sustain capabilities necessary for mission success.⁷ Additionally, all Special Forces Soldiers are required to know how to call for a medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) and operate in a search-and-rescue network using combat search-and-rescue (CSAR) radios.⁸

Although all sustainment training in the various occupational skills is essential, medical sustainment presents real problems. Active and Guard SF medical personnel must be ready to provide medical support through the entire spectrum of Special Operations core tasks. Even after two years of qualification training, they must maintain certification as an emergency medical technician-practitioner (EMT-P). They are required to attend Special Forces Medical Skills Sustainment Programs at the Joint Special Operations Medical Training Center (JSOMTC) at Fort Bragg, NC, every two years so they can maintain currency in the national registry. This sustainment training averages an additional week a year that a SF medic in the Guard must spend away from his home, work, and possibly his Guard unit. A SF medic who is not credentialed is not deployable, although exceptions to policy are possible in rare situations. For medics on Active Duty this may be a non-issue: They are already on Active Duty and thus do not need to make adjustments in their personal and professional lives to attend. But for SF medics in the Guard, sustainment training could require taking additional time off from work or school. Or it could mean that a unit's medic is not available for the unit's Annual Training (AT) exercise since many states will not support funding for both training and AT.

Besides sustainment of their occupational skills, SF personnel often have additional skill sets, including Military Free Fall (MFF), Special Operations Target Interdiction Course (SOTIC), combat diver, Special Forces Advanced Urban Combat (SFAUC), and jumpmaster—along with one of the most significant additional skills, operations and intelligence training. These advanced military occupational skills are required for at least two Soldiers in all Special Forces detachments.⁹ According to regulations, each operational detachment will have a minimum of three jumpmasters, two SOTIC (level 1) Soldiers, two Advanced Special Operations Techniques ASOT (level III) Soldiers. Also, all SF Soldiers will be SFAUC and ASOT (level II) qualified. For detachments designated as MFF or combat diver, there is the additional requirement for two MFF jumpmasters or two dive supervisors and two dive medical officers respectively. Additionally, each Special Forces detachment will have a qualified Air Movement Officer (AMO) and a Soldier qualified in handling hazardous materials (HAZMAT).¹⁰ These are minimal requirements for both the Guard and Active Duty Special Forces units.¹¹ These additional specialty skill sets require proficiency and sustainment training. Specialty skills are perishable, so they require periodic requalification. Regulations do not allow specialty training to dominate a

training calendar year, so commanders must find a way to integrate this training into other training requirements.¹²

Besides the specialty training requirement for SF Soldiers, there is a requirement for acquiring or sustaining other skills. All Soldiers are required to attend formal courses to aid in their professional development, such as a Non-Commissioned Officer Course and possibly the Operations and Intelligence Course. Language refresher and enhancement training is required and tested annually.¹³ Regional Orientation training is a hallmark of Special Forces Soldiers. Each Active Duty unit has the goal of deploying in theater once each fiscal year (FY); Guard SF units have the goal of deploying every three years.¹⁴

All SF members are required to have comprehensive Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical training and to integrate this training into tactical training.¹⁵ Another area of special emphasis in the Special Forces community is physical fitness. In SF, commanders are authorized to establish fitness standards that exceed Army minimums and to conduct fitness programs designed to increase their Soldiers' fitness.¹⁶ With only scheduled monthly weekend drills for ARNG SF and in view of all of the tasks that must be accomplished, physical fitness is largely left to the individual.

Core Competencies

Special Forces units have seven primary core tasks. One of these is Unconventional Warfare, which is considered the quintessential competency. Unconventional capabilities provide the methodology and skill sets required for all other SF missions. Special Forces is specifically organized, trained, and equipped for the conduct of UW. SF Soldiers now more than ever are regionally oriented as a part of Army transformation. They are language-qualified and specifically trained to conduct UW against hostile nation-states and non-state actors.¹⁷

Another SF task, Foreign Internal Defense (FID), is accomplished through training, advising, and, if necessary, accompanying host nation personnel. This mission often calls on all the skill sets of an SF operational element, including tactical skills, advanced medical skills, demolitions, weapons, weapons systems, and communications equipment skills. Special Forces use these skills to develop host-nation capabilities to build and sustain a self-sufficient force.¹⁸

Direct Action missions are the third SF task. These missions or operations are designed to achieve specific, well-defined, and often sensitive results. These operations often include the use of indigenous forces to facilitate operational security, force protection, target acquisition, and target destruction.¹⁹

Special Reconnaissance is the next SF task; Special Forces are specifically trained to perform this type of mission. Special Reconnaissance Operations include, but are not limited to, regional survey teams in support of the Theater Special Operations Command. These missions are typically conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments. They are designed to collect or verify information of strategic or operational significance for the Regional Combatant Commander.²⁰

Counter Terrorism (CT) is another significant SF task. All Special Forces units are expected to be able to execute these operations. However, specially trained and equipped Special Forces units routinely conduct CT operations.²¹

Special Forces are also expected to provide limited support to Information Operations (IO). Mainly, SF units conduct Direct Action to destroy enemy communications nodes to deny their information operations.²²

The last core task is Counter Proliferation (CP). Elements of Special Forces are expected to perform CP of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) as directed. The task may include locating, identifying, seizing, destroying, rendering safe, transporting, capturing, or recovering WMD.²³

Looking to the Future and Key Leaders' Perspectives

The Strategic Planning Guidance for the U.S. Army Special Operations Command for the period of 2008-2015 has much to say regarding the issue of SF standards. Regarding Special Operations units' support of our nation at war, this document noted that since 11 September 2001 all elements have been fully engaged and are experiencing an all-time high operational tempo, which is going to persist.²⁴

SOF's mission for the foreseeable future is to fight the war on terrorism, maintain force readiness, and transform for the future. The basic strategy for the U. S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) is to organize, train, and equip Soldiers and grow adaptive leaders. It is essential that USASOC provide forces capable of meeting the security challenges of today, tomorrow, and always. It will be necessary for units to continue to evolve and optimize organic force structure as well as focus training to master specialized core competencies. Soldiers are the centerpiece of the current force and will remain so into the future. Special Operations Soldiers, teams, and crews are trained to conduct highly specialized missions that other units are not trained, equipped, or organized to perform. Special operations tasks demand that only the most qualified Soldiers serve in SF. The ranks of SOF require mature, selectively recruited personnel who are imbued with character and who are mentally tough,

highly moral, honorable, and determined. Our Soldiers must be physically fit, politically and culturally sensitive, individually lethal when necessary, tactically proficient, and undaunted when faced with ambiguity. Selected Special Forces Soldiers must be regionally focused.²⁵

Special Forces Soldiers operating in covert and clandestine environments with host nation assets need considerable language proficiency, at a standard that is much higher than our current level of proficiency. Attaining this level of competency is a significant issue to ARNG SF. To achieve greater language proficiency, the schoolhouse must work with the Defense Language Institute, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, academia, and our major Subordinate Commands to develop effective individual, unit, and self-development training strategies and plans that improve initial language acquisition and sustainment. Personnel proponent policies must clearly reflect the importance of language proficiency. These standards should affect Soldier promotions and unit readiness.²⁶

Current guidance stipulates that properly equipping our Soldiers should have the highest priority.²⁷ Every deployed Soldier needs the best individual equipment available. Special Forces has the objective of providing campaign-quality SF units that can operate jointly as part of an expeditionary force, yet ARNG SF only comes into possession of much of this equipment and becomes proficient with it when they are preparing to participate in a real world commitment. The USASOC Strategy admonishes that all units, Active and Guard, must remain focused on mastering their core competencies without dilution of capabilities due to inefficient duplication of tasks.²⁸ Sustaining this focus is easier said than done for ARNG SF due to obvious time constraints. These constraints will be discussed later in the paper.

General Bryan D. Brown, Commander of the U. S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), is responsible for all SOF, both Active and Reserve. He testified recently before a Congressional committee concerning the status of the United States Special Operations Command: "Today's United States Special Operations Forces (SOF) is the most capable in the world. They have performed magnificently on the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan, and in their support of Geographic Combatant Commander activities around the world."²⁹ He further noted that his priorities in the Global War on Terrorism include the readiness of forces and building SOF's future capabilities to be even more capable to meet the demands of the changing strategic environment. He testified that he would build capabilities by increasing emphasis on organizing, training, and equipping the force to support our attacks on terrorist networks. He attributed Special Operations success on the battlefield to the operators, especially Special Forces Soldiers. He referred to President Bush's description of these individuals in the Special Operations community as "special operators, carefully selected, highly

trained, and well equipped, that continue to be the worst nightmare of America's worst enemies".³⁰

During a recent interview by a reporter from *Special Operations Technology Magazine*, General Brown answered several questions concerning training standards, specifically about ARNG SF. He referred to the aforementioned strategic planning process and his organization's recognition of the need to take a thorough look at capabilities. He declared, "We took a tough look at new ideas for redesigns of some of our organizations so they would be more robust, more capable, and more flexible. We looked hard at our mix of Active Duty and Reserve component units to determine where we could make adjustments to improve our responsiveness to the nation's needs. Humans are more important than hardware."³¹

The General then concluded that institutional training is the key to SOF effectiveness. He knew that the force needed to grow and would need to increase its ability to recruit, select, and train the right people to meet the high demands of SOF missions. The General acknowledged the need for additional specialized training and organizational restructure. Through careful analysis and implementation, "we can build a more cable organization, with better-equipped SOF warriors".³² He also mentioned capability gaps that need to be resolved.

During the interview, he was asked whether SOF in the National Guard is getting the equipment and training they need to work seamlessly with Active units. General Brown responded that by necessity the units are getting the equipment and training they need and that Guard forces are receiving better training and deploying more frequently than ever before. He noted that USSOCOM relies heavily on these units to support and sustain SOF's contributions to the GWOT and that elements of the 19th and 20th SF Groups have deployed several times in support of OEF. General Brown added that these units have accumulated more than 60 months of deployment time in Afghanistan. According to the General, these Guardsmen have enabled SOF to remain engaged in many Theater Security Cooperation Program activities that would otherwise have been abandoned and that ARNG SF units have proven themselves reliable SOF partners in the GWOT. The General believes that the type and quantity of equipment fielded to the ARNG SF groups is equivalent to that going to the Active component.³³

Lieutenant General Philip Kensinger Jr. is the commander of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC). As with General Brown, a member of the *Special Operations Technology Magazine* interviewed him. Asked about the ratio of Active and Guard forces and the possibility of force restructure, he responded that the organization must grow as a force. He said that USASOC is carefully reviewing the ratio of Active to Reserve forces to ensure continued support to the Global War on Terrorism.³⁴

He spoke of how during the Vietnam era Special Forces recruited individuals right off the street. He said a change took place in the 80's to recruit experienced Soldiers from within the conventional forces and observed that since 9/11 the recruitment has again brought in people with no previous military experience. He explained that these recruits enlist for five years. After basic training, they attend Advanced Infantry School at Ft. Benning, Georgia. From there they go to Airborne School before they qualify for selection through a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) move. This sequence gives the Army an airborne infantryman, even if he does not pass the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC). The General is referring here to the Active Component Soldier. When a Guard Soldier fails SFAS, most often the Soldier comes back to the Guard unit that sent him, placing an additional administrative burden on this Guard unit. General Kensinger spoke clearly about standards and emphatically declared, "My guidance to everyone is that we will not lower standards. While there may be some slight changes in how we get people up to those standards, we will maintain them without fail. We promote the teach-coach-mentor method in our training."³⁵ He asserted that ARSOF will build and sustain a force sufficient to support the evolving GWOT. Accordingly, force sustainment will continue to be a top priority.

Responding to a question about maintaining the current operators' skills during the high pace of current operational demands, he cited the maturity of the force, the experiences gained overseas, and the familiar theme of tough selection standards and evaluations that ensure recruiting the best candidates. Another key question raised the issue of the continued existence of ARNG SF units. The interviewer wanted to know what mechanisms USASOC has in place to support Soldiers transitioning from the war zones back to the states. The General replied that every Soldier returning from a combat zone goes through a series of checkpoints to assure their adjustment is as smooth as possible.³⁶ However, the jury is still out on what may be an uneven approach for the returning ARNG SF Soldier.

Major General James W. Parker is rightly regarded as a keeper of the standards. He is the commander of the United States of America John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS), which is responsible for the Army's Special Forces ability to conduct operations worldwide. During an interview, he declared his purpose is to train the highest quality Soldiers to serve in the Army's premier special operations fighting force. He recognizes that USAJFKSWCS has changed in the last few years. He noted that SF has undergone the most sweeping transformation in its history and that it is his school's job to prepare SF Soldiers for combat. He cited the need to recruit, train and educate the right individuals, knowing that in many cases they will be joining units already deployed.³⁷

The USAJFKSWCS acknowledges the urgency of knowing the SF Soldiers they train are headed for SF battalions that are deployed seven months out of a year. Their training concentrates on enhancing core unconventional warfare skills and placing great emphasis on foreign language training. According to General Parker, "SF is the force of choice with the ideal skill sets to counter this asymmetrical threat."³⁸ General Parker reported that since 2002 there has been an increase of SF graduates from 350 per year to 750. He claimed that this was accomplished without sacrificing quality and without lowering standards. When the transformation of the force was being considered, his highest priority was not to lower the training standards. Indeed the standard was not lowered, it was raised. The higher language proficiency standards are one such example. As far as the number of personnel needed to fill the various units, to include the ARNG SF Groups, the General asserted that the number of personnel needed will not drive the program. Then he reminded us of another SOF truth: Special Operations Forces cannot be mass-produced.

Concerning the subject of distance learning, General Parker has noted that it is becoming an increasingly important part of SF Soldiers' training and education. It is intended to serve as an adjunct to resident instruction and is valuable for continuing education and operational support. It gives Soldiers an opportunity to sustain and improve their skills through distributed learning. As for recurrent training, most of it, according to General Parker, can be done at the unit level. However, SF Guard units do not have the time or training flexibility to provide sufficient recurrent training. Due to the many other obligations of SF Guardsman that will be discussed later in this paper the suggestion of distance learning during the traditional Guard drill weekend is simply not at this time feasible. The USAJFKSWCS has also increased its role in sustaining Soldiers' language skills over the course of their careers through courseware development, language labs, and related support.³⁹ The issue for SF Guard Soldiers once again resides in the question of on whose time the distance learning will take place. Such training is not appropriate for monthly Guard drills, which focus largely on other training events. It is unrealistic to expect civilian employers to support linguistic training. A practical solution would be for Guard Soldiers to seek language training from nearby educational institutions. But who would pay the tuition as well as the Soldier's compensation? There are funds that could be fenced towards such an enterprise, but a matter of compensation for the Guard SF Soldier must be considered.

Serving Two Masters

Jesus said “No servant can serve two masters; He will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other.”⁴⁰ It may in fact be too reductive to say a ARNG SF serves only two masters. He is obliged to meet the standards of not only his war-fighting command but also of the many requirements placed upon him by the state he serves. He has the added burden of civilian employment or advanced civilian schooling, which adds to the friction for qualification or sustainment. His greatest and most significant adversary is time—the time necessary to accomplish all that needs to be done to satisfy all concerned. The clichés voiced by many within military circles of “do more with less” and “do less better” offer little comfort to those who must meet an ever-increasing standard. Special Forces Guardsmen do not enjoy the luxury of reducing their workload because of what is at stake.

In the National Guard, Soldiers are generally mandated to train the equivalent of 24 days a year on weekends, usually referred to as Guard drills. Guard Soldiers then dedicate an additional 15 to 21 days a year to their Annual Training (AT). The amount of training time authorized for AT depends on whether the training will take place outside the continental United States, but AT will not exceed 21 days. Special Forces Guardsmen, along with all of the aforementioned specialization and additional training requirements, are generally treated the same by their states as traditional Guardsman concerning time spent training. There are exceptions such as the authorization for additional drill time of up to 16 hours per year to allow for the four mandatory airborne operations. But this exception is really unachievable because National Guard Bureau authorizes the additional time but has not in recent years allocated funds to cover the additional training period. A term that may best describe this exception is “required, but unresourced.”

Along with the training requirements filtered down from Special Forces Command to the Special Forces Guard units, the 15 states with SF units stipulate additional directions for training that include the Guard Special Forces units.⁴¹ In Florida—a state that has a Special Forces battalion headquarters, a support company and two Special Forces line companies—the state has specific training requirements and constraints that apply to all Florida National Guard personnel. But these requirements are add-on's for SF units; they do not complement SF requirements.

In training year 2006, all Florida National Guard units will train in convoy operations, to include convoy battle drills; casualty evacuation; convoy counter-ambush; and crew-served weapons training. Military Support to Civil Authorities training will obviously receive the attention it deserves, since it is a primary mission of the Guard. Florida also does not allow training

outside the hours of 0800 on Saturday and 1600 on Sunday. This safety consideration cuts deeply into the standard SF Guard drill. It has been standard practice for SF units in the Guard to come in very early and leave late in an attempt to complete the various taskings. According to state regulations in Florida, Soldiers whose civilian commitments do not allow them to attend required military schools should attend these schools during their units' AT. Again, this restriction can cripple an SF unit's ability to collectively train. Moreover, during this training year, according to Florida's Yearly Training Guidance (YTG), at least one Soldier from each Special Forces Detachment will become combat lifesaver qualified, and all Soldiers will be trained at Anti-Terrorism Level One.⁴²

During this same training year, the ARNG SF Battalion headquartered in Florida is designated as the collective training battalion for 20th SFG (A). All of the detachments are required to attend SFAUC training at a company level, and specific teams must execute counter-narcotics missions as directed by Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) to meet a prior commitment. Along with the other ARNG SF battalions, SF battalions must offer three language courses and conduct a language test for all SF qualified individuals.

As mentioned previously, ARNG SF must produce a plan to get SF Soldiers qualified in a timely fashion. All of the ARNG SF battalion commanders have been specifically directed to have a viable plan in place to prepare individuals for selection. ARNG SF battalion commanders have been encouraged to include in their collective training Close Air Support and Terminal Guidance Operations Training. The 20th Group guidance also directs that each detachment maintain two anti-terrorist / force protection qualified members.

Beyond this comprehensive list of requirements for ARNG SF, many routine training requirements remain, such as weapons qualification for all organic systems. If funding is available, units must conduct drug testing. At a minimum, they must offer a drug abuse briefing. Each of the required four annual airborne operations usually takes up the better part of a training day. The annually required briefings, too numerous to list, if added up, take the majority of each ARNG drill. The APFT tests and combat water survival tests must be scheduled twice a year. NBC training, if done to standard, will also take the better part of a drill. Maintenance training, to include armory cleanup, out of necessity must be done at each drill. A yearly field training exercise, a unit live fire, as well as MOS sustainment training, takes up to three drills and does not provide anyone involved with an adequate level of expertise. Adding it all up qualitatively or quantitatively, there simply is not enough time to get everything done that is minimally required for ARNG SF units or individual Soldiers.⁴³ The ARNG SF units must be authorized the additional time needed to meet the standards and directives from multiple

sources. Further, requirements should be deconflicted or at least prioritized so that ARNG SF Soldiers and their units can realistically meet the expectations of those that plan to utilize this strategic asset.

SF Soldier's Personal Perspective

The majority of the author's 31-year career in the SF community has been spent in the ARNG SF—a career that began in the early 1970s as a young enlisted man serving on an Active Duty SF A-team in 7th Group. Much of my time was spent in qualifying for SF and acquiring additional SF skills. In 1977 the writer volunteered for the ARNG SF following an Active Duty enlistment. Over time, the writer was surprised to discover that ARNG SF Soldiers did not meet the same qualification standards as their Active Duty counterparts. Yet he did not immediately discern any significant differences in the ARNG SF Soldiers' performances and those of former Active Duty SF comrades.

But as time passed, differences became all too apparent. For example, when the ARNG SF unit was training Soldiers from another country, the author was amazed that the detachment's weapons sergeant lacked familiarity with a common U.S. weapons system. The Sergeant revealed that his only training on the system came during a two-week Special Forces Reserve Component Qualification Program that he had attended several years earlier. He had not touched the system since that familiarization exercise. Similarly, a new company commander in the unit was promoted to major and was officially recognized as Special Forces Qualified solely on the basis of extended tenure in the unit and due to his completion of jump school, which took him three tries to accomplish.

The Major's situation was not unique. The writer once queried the unit's personnel officer about a letter he was typing in the orderly room. It turned out that he was requesting SF Qualification based solely on his tenure with the unit. Even though he had never trained at Camp MacKall, his request was granted. Today reduced standards for SF qualification have almost been eliminated, and most of those qualified under a reduced standard are now either out of the system or unfortunately in leadership positions. Yet ARNG and Active Duty standards still vary and this variance in any form is inexcusable at any level. The Reserve Component Special Forces Qualification System has been shut down, which was a major step in the right direction. But many states still send ARNG officers to Reserve Component courses such as the Infantry Officers Advance Course. Special Forces Officers, both Active and Guard must complete an advanced course as part of the SF Qualification process. Allowing SF officers to qualify through the RC system or distance education raises questions about standards. Unit

leadership should be alert to alternate paths to qualification and not accept short cuts. It should be clearly understood by each Officer and the state that sends him that this method of qualification will not meet the standard for SF Officers in the ARNG.

Because it is so difficult and time-consuming to get SF Soldiers qualified in the established, primarily Active Duty Army schools, some ARNG SF commanders may recommend reviving the Special Forces Reserve Component Qualification Program. They may contend that using the Active Component courses is too time-consuming and unpredictable for ARNG Soldiers attending college full-time or holding down civilian employment. Further, some proponents of the Reserve Component qualification system were possibly beneficiaries of that system. If it served them (and their careers) well, why not make it available to other SF candidates?

As a SF company and SF battalion commander, the author informed recruits that they could serve only one master at a time. They were advised not to join the unit if they were not wholly committed to becoming SF Qualified the right way, the Army way, the path with a single standard. The Soldiers were informed that non-qualified Soldiers dragged the unit down, jeopardizing readiness and mission. It is apparent some recruits chose not to devote themselves wholeheartedly to the process and found a more suitable vocation.

Conclusion

Every day individuals make the conscious decision to join one of the many Special Forces Guard Units across this country. Hopefully, they do so with the clear understanding this will be a life-altering experience and understand the stakes are high. For each recruit who becomes Special Forces Qualified, the nation has gained another warrior in the GWOT. Likewise, every day SF Soldiers make the decision to leave Active Duty Special Forces in the pursuit of other interests or perhaps to just catch their breath. Deployments for seven months out of a year while on Active Duty, with no end in sight, can give even dedicated Soldiers pause. It is tragic that such experienced warriors could be lost forever from the SF community. Recruiting these individuals into the ARNG SF is a win-win for all concerned.

Guard SF Soldiers have increased their level of qualification by virtue of elimination of a dual standard, but persistence of a double standard regarding sustainment is inexcusable. Standards are everything. This SRP has cited senior leaders' commitments regarding the standard. Guard SF Soldiers and units should be held to the same standard as their Active Component counterparts. The National Guard Bureau and the states with ARNG SF units should acknowledge the "specialness" of ARNG SF Soldiers and units and treat them

accordingly. The following recommendations offer ways to preserve ARNG SF units in a sustained state of readiness: Time is possibly the single biggest detriment towards sustainment for the traditional Special Forces National Guardsman. Special Forces Units cannot be treated the same as other traditional Guard units. If the National Guard Bureau or the respective states refuse to grant Special Forces Guard more time to complete needed training, their SF units should be relocated to another state.

As noted previously, ARNG SF units are required to conduct four airborne operations in a given year. Sixteen hours of additional training time is authorized to meet this standard. But the authorization is unfunded, so the training time must be taken from other pursuits. This should be fixed immediately.

Special Forces Soldiers and Officers are not always permitted to attend the same professional development courses as their Active Duty counterparts. They remain at the mercy of states trying to save a few dollars by forcing enrollment in Reserve Component courses. The differences in these courses usually become evident when the skills are needed most. We are all aware of budgetary constraints, but the skill sets required for Special Forces Soldiers (a strategic asset) require the best available training. Guard SF Soldiers should have timely and predictable access to the best training. This issue can be easily resolved. The elimination of options would be a significant step in the right direction. The SF Command must be very clear to all of the states that maintain SF units that there is a single method of qualification and professional development and that this method includes participation in Active Duty schools. States and some of the individuals affected will balk at the requirement. The states will pause over funding issues, and the individuals will resist the added time requirements. But individual candidates should be satisfied by an open and upfront standard which is clearly articulated and not waived under any circumstance. The state will be satisfied if the funding responsibility shifted entirely to SF Command. Then SF Soldiers will qualify under a single standard without exception.

Special Forces Command should actively participate in the process of maintaining common SF standards. Not too long ago, Special Forces Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) were permitted to transfer to Special Forces Guard locations down to company size as a permanent change of station (PCS) move. These individuals were tasked with assisting in unit readiness. Although a few were assigned to ARNG SF units because they were not wanted in their Active units, these individuals were generally very helpful in sustaining unit preparedness and proficiency. SF command should facilitate more integration of Active Component SF Soldiers into ARNG SF units down to the company level. There are several senior NCOs in

Special Forces who are close (within two years) of retirement and are preparing to once again enter the civilian work force. Many would be willing to spend their last two years of service, assisting one of the several ARNG SF units spread across the U.S. They could provide Guard units with additional full-time support and guidance, and they could also enjoy the opportunity to make contacts with key members of the community that are usually nested within the unit they are supporting. It is clearly understood that SF command needs all of the individuals it can muster for the GWOT, as is evident in plans for expansion of the SF Active Duty forces. But these NCOs will serve a greater function in the long run by enhancing the skill sets of ARNG SF Soldiers and units through their dedication to a single standard. This program will require the approval of SF Command to become reality.

Special Forces in the ARNG have demonstrated extraordinary dedication and sacrifice. Mobilizations since 9/11 have nearly exhausted ARNG SF Soldiers and units. With some time to catch their breath and with sufficient funding to sustain their specialized skills, they will remain a significant force for the future. There is no room for a reduced standard for Special Forces in the ARNG. It is not yet time to consider the elimination or inactivation of Special Forces in the National Guard. It is time to acknowledge the significant contributions the ARNG SF Soldiers and units can make in the GWOT and to resource them accordingly.⁴⁴

Endnotes

¹ George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, September 2002), i. An excerpt from the President's speech dated September 17, 2002 in which he described the means the country would use to defeat the threat of terrorism. Also under section III, entitled Strengthen Alliances to Defeat Global Terrorism and Work to Prevent Attacks against US and our Friends, I used a portion of the first paragraph. President Bush states, "The United States is fighting a war of global reach. The enemy is not a single political regime or person or religion or ideology. The enemy is terrorism—premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against innocents."

² Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone, On War in the 21st century* (St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, MBI Publishing Company, 2004), 233. In the global war on terrorism the author states that we recruit, train, educate, and retain the personnel we need to fight in the 21st century.

³ *Army Special Operations Forces FM 3-05 (FM 100-25) (ID)* (Fort Bragg, NC: U.S. Army Special Operations Command, May 2005) 3-1. A keystone publication and the integrating manual for United States (U.S.) Army special operations forces (ARSOF). It describes the strategic landscape, fundamentals, key tasks, capabilities, and sustainment involved in the full range of military operations.

⁴ Harrison B. Gilliam, *Role of National Guard Special Forces in the New Enhanced Special Forces Group* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Command and General Staff College, Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2004) 03. The scope of his thesis was to define an appropriate alignment and force integration of National Guard Special forces in the transformation of Special Forces into a new enhanced Special Forces Group. He wrote that the current force alignment is relevant to the historical linkage and had not shifted with the change in our country's demographics. He suggested that an adjustment needs to take place.

⁵ *Army Special Operations Forces FM 3-05 (FM 100-25) (ID)*.

⁶ *Special Forces Pipeline Fact Sheet*; available from [Http://www.soc.mil/swcs/Pipeline.Shtml](http://www.soc.mil/swcs/Pipeline.Shtml); Internet; accessed 15 October 2005.

⁷ *United States Army Special Forces Command (Airborne) (USASFC) (A) Regulation 350-1, Component Training* (Fort Bragg, NC: U.S. Army Special Operations Command, 2 November 2005). This regulation assigns training responsibilities, provides training management and resource policy, prescribes individual and collective training requirements, and establishes training assessment and certification guidance for Soldiers and units assigned to United States Army Special Forces Command.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ *United States Army Special Forces Command (Airborne) (USASFC) (A) Regulation 350-1, Component Training*, 5-5. Chapter 5 covers individual training and discusses specialized duties or tasks related to those assigned to Special Forces detachments.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² *United States Army Special Forces Command (Airborne) (USASFC) (A) Regulation 350-1, Component Training*, 6-2.

¹³ Ibid., 5-4. The command standard for all Special Forces qualified enlisted individuals is 1-1 and 2-2 for officers, commanders are encouraged to maintain and enhance language capabilities within their units.

¹⁴ Ibid. Commanders are to aggressively pursue and focus on regional orientation in terms of language, environmental, and cultural training requirements.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ *Army Special Operations Forces FM 3-05 (FM 100-25) (ID)*, 3-4.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Phillip Kensinger, *U.S. Army Special Operations Command Strategic Planning Guidance*, 2008-2015 (Fort Bragg, NC: U.S. Army Special Operations Command, 2005), Volume 3, issue 6, page1.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Bryan D. Brown, "Interview of General Bryan D. Brown," interview by Jeff Mckaughan *Special Operations Technology 3 (2005): 47*. General Brown is the commander, USSOC, MacDill AFB, FL and is responsible for all Special Operations Forces of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps; Active Duty and Reserve. His thoughts are significant to the vision of the organizations in his charge and gives focus to his subordinate commanders regarding the standard.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Brown. General Brown is the commander, USSOCOM, MacDill AFB, FL and is responsible for all Special Operations Forces of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps; Active Duty and Reserve. His thoughts are significant to the vision of the organizations in his charge and gives focus to his subordinate commanders regarding the standard.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Phillip R. Kensinger, "Interview of Lieutenant General Phillip Kensinger," interview by Jeff Mckaughan *Special Operations Technology 3 (2005): 47*. Lieutenant General Kensinger is the commander of USASOC and works directly for General Brown. He is responsible for all Army SOF, which includes SF Army Guard Units. His opinions regarding the standard, force structure and the challenges ahead are significant.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ James W. Parker, "Interview of Major General James W. Parker," interview by Jeff Mckaughan *Special Operations Technology 3 (2005): 29*, Major General Parker is the Commander, JFK Special Warfare Center and School, I referred to him as the keeper of the standard for Special forces training and would be appropriately depicted as a training

transformer. His opinions regarding the standard are also noteworthy of any paper on the enforcement of a standard.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Thomas Nelson, Inc., *The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, Luke 16:13 (Atlanta: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994) 1492.

⁴¹ "Army National Guard, Special Forces Website," 4 October 2005, available from http://www.arng.army.mil/about_us/organization/special_forces.asp, Internet; accessed 4 October 2005. The Army National Guard Official Web Site.

⁴² *Department of the Army, Headquarters 83rd Troop Command, Florida Army National Guard, Training year 2006 Yearly Training Guidance (TY06YTG)* (Washington, D.C.: The Pentagon, 2005). It provides the framework within which leaders will conduct training during FY 06.

⁴³ *United States Army Special Forces Command (Airborne) (USASFC) (A) Regulation 350-1, Component Training*, H-1-H-6.

⁴⁴ Professor Jim Hanlon, Communicative Arts Division of the USAWC, interviewed by author, nd, Carlisle Barracks, PA. His assistance in the preparation of this paper included recommendations of various sources of information and editorial direction. His assistance contributed greatly to the final product and I am eternally grateful.